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ACTION EAP-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	COME-00	DOTE-00	DS-00
	EB-00	OIGO-00	E-00	FAAE-00	FBIE-00	UTED-00	VC-00
	TEDE-00	INR-00	LAB-01	VCE-00	DCP-01	NSAE-00	OES-01
	IRM-00	STR-00	TEST-00	TRSE-00	EPAE-00	DSCC-00	DRL-02
	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/005W				

-----422B76 231000Z /38  
FM AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5725  
AMEMBASSY HANOI  
DIA WASHDC

UNCLAS HO CHI MINH CITY 001316

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP/BCLTV

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [BEXP](#) [BTIO](#) [ECON](#) [ECIN](#) [ETRD](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [VM](#) [BTA](#)

SUBJECT: DPO'S MEETING WITH STANDING DEPUTY SECRETARY OF HCMC COMMUNIST PARTY COMMITTEE

1. SUMMARY: DPO MET WITH VO VAN CUONG, STANDING DEPUTY SECRETARY OF THE HCMC COMMUNIST PARTY COMMITTEE (CPC),

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NOVEMBER 8, ACCOMPANIED BY ECONOFF AND CONOFF. CUONG SAID HCMC HAS HISTORICALLY BEEN A "LAB" FOR PARTY POLICY FORMULATION, BUT STRESSED THAT FINAL ACTION ON "EXPERIMENTS" RESTS WITH THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE IN HANOI. CUONG SAID HE HOPED THE USG WOULD PLAY A  
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SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN LINKING U.S. AND VIETNAMESE BUSINESSES AS BOTH SIDES IMPLEMENT THE BTA. ASKED ABOUT CONTROLS ON INTERNET ACCESS, HE STATED THE PARTY UNDERSTANDS VIETNAM MUST BE MORE OPEN FOR THE COUNTRY TO SUCCEED IN THE GLOBAL MARKET. END SUMMARY.

2. CUONG WELCOMED DPO TO HCMC, AND SAID THAT HCMC HAS HISTORICALLY BEEN A "LAB" FOR EXPERIMENTATION ON POLICY FORMATION. HE CITED THREE EXAMPLES ON THE SOCIAL FRONT: POVERTY REDUCTION AND HUNGER ELIMINATION, "HOUSES OF COMPASSION" AND "HOUSES OF GRATITUDE." (NOTE: THE LATTER TWO ARE SOCIAL PROGRAMS PROVIDING HOUSING TO POOR FAMILIES AND TO FAMILIES WHO LOST MEMBERS DURING THE WAR.) HE ADDED THAT THE HCMC CPC IS CURRENTLY FOCUSED ON A NUMBER OF OTHER SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS, NOTING HE IS IN CHARGE OF MONITORING AND IMPLEMENTING ALL PROGRAMS DEVELOPED BY THE CPC. HE CITED PROGRAMS ON STREET CRIME, PROSTITUTION, AND DRUG USE AS EXAMPLES. HE ALSO CITED FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING FOR THE POOR AS EXAMPLES OF PROGRAMS SPECIFICALLY ADDRESSING PROBLEMS CREATED BY HCMC'S RAPID POPULATION GROWTH.

3. CUONG SAID THAT, ON THE ECONOMIC SIDE, HCMC HAS BEEN THE TESTING GROUND FOR MANY PILOT PROJECTS. THE CITY'S DYNAMISM HAS CONTRIBUTED TO THE SUCCESS AND EVENTUAL NATIONWIDE IMPLEMENTATION OF MANY OF THESE PROJECTS. DPO SUGGESTED HCMC'S DYNAMISM WILL BE AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BTA, INTIMATING THE HCMC CPC WILL HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO PLAY A DIRECT ROLE IN CREATING THE CONDITIONS FOR  
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SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT. RESPONDING TO A FOLLOW-ON POINT ABOUT INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND THE INTERNET, CUONG SAID EXPLICITLY THAT THE CPC UNDERSTANDS THERE WILL HAVE TO BE MORE OPENNESS IN ORDER FOR VIETNAM TO BE COMPETITIVE IN THE GLOBAL MARKETPLACE.

4. CUONG SAID HE HOPES FOR BILATERAL COOPERATION ON BTA IMPLEMENTATION, IN ORDER TO MAKE THE BTA BENEFICIAL FOR BOTH SIDES. HE SAID THE GVN IS IN THE PROCESS OF REVIEWING ITS POLICIES AT THE LOCAL AND NATIONAL LEVEL IN ORDER TO FIND AND ROOT OUT BARRIERS TO SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION. HE ADDED THAT HE HOPES CONGEN HCMC WILL PLAY A LEADING ROLE IN LINKING U.S. AND VIETNAMESE BUSINESSES AND LOOKS FORWARD TO A CLOSER WORKING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE USG AND GVN.

15. TURNING TO THE DELICATE ISSUE OF PRESS COVERAGE, DPO ASKED HOW THE CONSULATE GENERAL COULD BEST WORK TO ADDRESS A LACK OF BALANCE IN VIETNAMESE PRESS REPORTING ON THE WAR AGAINST TERRORISM IN AFGHANISTAN. CUONG REPLIED THAT, ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT KNOW THE DETAILS ABOUT HOW REPORTING IS DEVELOPED, NEWSPAPERS IN VIETNAM REPORT NEWS ONLY "TO THE LEVEL OF THEIR KNOWLEDGE." IN ADDITION TO INCOMPLETE INFORMATION, CUONG SAID ANOTHER PROBLEM THE PRESS FACES IS THE GROWING COMMERCIALIZATION OF THE PAPERS AND A RESULTING SENSATIONALISM OF THE NEWS AS THE MEDIA COMPETES TO "MAKE A BUCK." HE SAID THERE HAVE BEEN CASES WHERE THE PARTY ITSELF HAS BEEN DISPLEASED WITH PRESS REPORTING. AT THE END OF THE DISCUSSION HE SAID HE "TOOK NOTE" OF  
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THE ISSUE. (NOTE: ALTHOUGH THERE IS CONSIDERABLE LEEWAY IN THE WAY EDITORS CAN PRESENT THE NEWS, WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THEY MUST CLEAR THEIR MATERIAL BEFORE IT IS PUBLISHED TO ENSURE IT IS IN LINE WITH PARTY VIEWS -- WHICH ON IMPORTANT ISSUES ARE DETERMINED IN HANOI.)

16. COMMENT: THIS MEETING FOUND CUONG MORE WILLING TO ENGAGE THAN IN THE PAST, WHILE STILL FOCUSED ON SET RESPONSES TO SENSITIVE TOPICS. ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, IN PARTICULAR, IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT THIS CPC OFFICIAL EXPRESSED HIGH HOPES FOR THE BTA AND AGREED PROPER IMPLEMENTATION IS IMPORTANT AND WILL REQUIRE SOME CHANGES. HE ALSO CONFIRMED HCMC'S ROLE AS AN INCUBATOR FOR NEW IDEAS -- AND WAS EVEN QUICK TO PICK UP ON THE NEED FOR MORE OPENNESS TO ATTRACT FOREIGN BUSINESS. IT WILL BE IMPORTANT TO DEVELOP PROGRAMS EARLY ON, WHICH WILL HELP HCMC CAPITALIZE ON THE BTA AND BECOME A MODEL FOR MODERN BUSINESS PRACTICES COUNTRYWIDE. YAMAUCHI

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